
The Liberal Women's Caucus

by Jackie F.P. Steele

Caucus meetings by nature are exclusive to elected Members of Parliament. In certain circumstances, staff are allowed access to provide a supportive role, but the private nature of Caucus is critical. It provides Members an opportunity to exchange views and offer frank assessments of events, policies and party dynamics behind closed doors. Little public documentation is available and records of proceedings are maintained for internal purposes alone, if they are kept at all. This article examines the Liberal Women's Caucus and the interaction of its members within the larger parliamentary community. The author concludes that the Liberal Women's Caucus has exerted significant influence in ensuring that policies and practices friendly to women are increasingly adopted on Parliament Hill.

Since its founding in 1993, the Liberal Women's Caucus has been open to all female Liberal Parliamentarians from both the House and Senate side.¹ At National Caucus, Carolyn Bennett, Caucus Chair during the time this study was initiated, has repeatedly extended an invitation to all of her Liberal colleagues to join their meetings, however, only one male MP took the initiative to participate regularly in the Liberal Women's Caucus and become a member.

The active members of the caucus have ebbed and flowed according to the issues being tackled at any given time, and the other competing responsibilities of the women Parliamentarians. The caucus is recognized as an official organ of the Party structure, reporting to National Caucus weekly, holding a seat on the National Executive, and working in collaboration with other organizations such as the Liberal Women's Commission and the Judy LaMarsh Fund. It meets in a private room of the Parliamentary Restaurant on Wednesdays between 12:00-1:30pm, which is the timeslot immediately following National Caucus which all Liberals are expected to

attend. As with other Caucuses, a nominal Caucus fee is contributed by active members, however, all of the Liberal women and one man considered a part of the Women's Caucus receive the information about Caucus meetings and activities. The range of Caucus meetings within the Liberal Party are coordinated through the office of the National Caucus Chair who ensures that each of the respective schedules of caucus meetings is respected by Liberal members; concurrent meetings are rarely allowed. In this way, all Caucuses are able to draw from a broader membership and function more successfully.

Of the 62 female and 1 male (Irwin Cotler) MPs and Senators who are members of Liberal Women's Caucus, most established the average attendance at weekly meetings as ranging between 15 and 25 individuals. A core group of women attend every week, but there is also a fluid exchange of members who attend somewhat less regularly. The focus of my research was upon the women who do attend the LWC, and the value they place upon the group, and that of its role within the larger parliamentary process as evidenced in their responses to my interview questions. Not all Caucus members were interviewed, nor did I attempt to interview the 30+ women who were unable or chose not to attend Caucus regularly. There are a myriad reasons why all 62 women do not attend the LWC each week. Aside from the more ob-

Jackie Steele was a parliamentary intern for 2000-2001. This article is an abridged version of a study awarded the Alf Hale prize as the best essay by a parliamentary intern. The article is based on interviews, a questionnaire and observations including attendance at the Liberal Women's caucus over a five-month period in 2001.

vious time restrictions upon participation such as meetings with representatives of important constituencies, hosting a school group or member from one's riding who are in Ottawa, and generally fulfilling the other competing obligations of the average Parliamentarian, some Caucus members interviewed noted that not all Liberal women identify with the feminist policy goals of the Caucus, and that some who have never in fact attended have a misconstrued vision of the work that goes on. Moreover, it has been noted that some of the women on the Hill fail to see the systemic barriers to women that exist; they do not see the need for the Caucus, and simply prefer to ally themselves with their male colleagues and have therefore refrained from playing an active part in the Caucus.

A Personal Support Network for Women

Parliament is still regarded as one of the last remaining bastions of male culture in Canadian institutions. The atmosphere in the Gothic Centre Block remains that of an old-fashioned men's club in which women are interlopers.² As one female MP remarked following the election, "the Brashiest of the class of '93 are busy learning how to play in the big leagues; feminism is not a big agenda item for me. I want visible power".

A survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union noted that many women in politics had commented on the slow pace of change in attitudes and practices despite the presence of women in their respective institutions. They noted the dominance of what was perceived as masculine behaviour, and talked of becoming like their male counterparts, fearing the adornment of the "male mask", abuse of power by male and female colleagues and the failure of other women to provide support.³ While one would think that this is more problematic in newer democracies or in parliaments with only a few token women, Sue Barnes noted that approximately half of the Liberal women in the House and Senate do not attend Women's Caucus. She explained, "some women think that they will get ahead faster if they act like mini-men and so choose to not align themselves with other women, and the Caucus itself. Caucus is not about personal gain." Despite the numerous responsibilities that may make it difficult for women to attend Caucus, given the competitive context, the presence of a group that can provide collegiality and emotional support for women who are forced to work within the constraints of this political culture is critical. Veteran parliamentarian Sheila Finestone asserted that the most important aspect of the LWC is the sense of belonging and network in a cold and unfriendly environment, and the sense of trust and collaboration towards common goals. Marlene Catterall

echoes this, saying that the Caucus is a place "where I can be totally and brutally honest ... I feel I can say what I feel and think". International human rights lawyer Irwin Cotler, also noted that he enjoyed the fellowship and friendship among members, and found it to be a great opportunity to discuss the gendered dimensions of public policy and politics in an informal yet organized setting.

The current Parliament has the most women ever with 62 Members of Parliament, or 20.6% of the legislators. The past three Parliaments have brought important increases in the number of women on the Hill, but personal accounts suggest that more women are still needed to bring systemic change to the political culture of the institution. In a 1999 speech on women's participation in the 21st century, Shabbir Cheema of the United Nations Development Programme sets 30% as the breaking point for critical mass to effectuate significant changes to the political climate.⁴ It seems that the perspectives change depending on one's personal experiences with the institution in question. As Mary Clancy stated following the 1993 election, "there are now thirty-six women among the 178 Liberal MPs. We went over the top, from tokenism to a voluble force."

Sydney Sharp asserts that women have learned to use subversive tactics to increase their influence beyond their numbers.⁵ The founding of the Liberal Women's Caucus in 1993 was one such way that women sought to organize themselves so that they could support one another in this unwelcoming environment, and use it as a base from which to pursue their roles on the Hill. Such a network would work to ensure that the women could survive the personal strains of political life on Parliament Hill, allowing a significant mass of women to build and increase with each election, bringing renewed energy for the job, and a commitment to mentor the newer women on the Hill.

A Professional Support Network

The Liberal Women's Caucus also serves as a professional support network for the women in at least three ways:

- it strives to distribute key positions held by the Liberal Party to women parliamentarians,
- it attempts to reform Liberal Party regulations to help break down the barriers to women pursuing elected office,
- it promotes gender equality through symbolic and practical action.

Over the years, the Liberal Women's Caucus has worked collectively to lobby for more gender parity on important committees such as Justice and Finance, re-

sulting in equal numbers of women and men being placed on the Justice Committee, and an extra woman being added to the Finance Committee.

The Liberal Women's Caucus has also lobbied to have more women in the Liberal spots for delegations abroad, assuring that all-party delegations, or Ministerial trips abroad include female parliamentarians as well. For positions that are elected, and not appointed, the Caucus has worked "subversively" as a collective to stack certain Parliamentary Groups to ensure that they would have a voting mass for the female candidate, be it Carolyn Parrish as Chair of the Canada-NATO Friendship Group, or Sue Barnes as Chair of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Caucus support can sometimes be perceived as a double edged sword. Whether or not these candidates solicited support from the Women's Caucus and were elected strictly as a result of the support from Women's Caucus is not always clear. Carolyn Parrish asserts that she won the Chair as a result of the experience she gained from working with the Group for five years, and that for every female vote in her favour, she had approximately 6 male votes. She discounts the fact that she was elected because she had the Caucus' support, and feels that it is a dangerous card to play and may have worked against her for some voters. She states, "I tend to be cautious because it can be turned against us and they outnumber us." She resented the statement made at National Caucus that implied that her success was due to support from the Women's Caucus.

A different example of the united support from within the Liberal National Caucus and its impact is the effective collegiality that worked to promote the candidacy of Jane Stewart for National Caucus Chair in 1994. When she mentioned to the Caucus that she was considering running for National Caucus Chair, there was resounding enthusiasm among Members to promote her candidacy. This promotion campaign included lobbying other members to vote for their candidate, and even influencing other candidates that they would not stand a chance in the face of Women's Caucus support. As Mary Clancy jokingly remarked, "I told my friend Ron MacDonald that I would break his kneecaps if he ran against her. She won the Chair uncontested."

In an adversarial context, it should not come as a surprise to anyone that a considerable degree of lobbying takes place. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that the LWC functions as a lobby within the Liberal Party. It is a forum that provides emotional and concrete support for women that is not provided by any other group on the Hill. Arguably, in a charged political arena where regional, linguistic, internal leadership squabbles are ongoing, the balance of power is constantly shifting.

Gender, among other factors, all comes into play, but it is difficult to ascribe any given success to one group in particular. However, while the Caucus may not be the only reason for the success of different women in gaining important positions, certainly their concerted effort and commitment to back strong female candidates who are considering certain positions can only help. Since one function of the LWC is to lobby, the danger exists that a backlash against female candidates will emerge. It is important to strike a balance; obviously the LWC tactics have met with an important degree of success, and female and male colleagues would do well to understand its organizing power. However, rather than openly reaffirming all of the Caucus victories, at times, keeping those gains under their hats has proven to be a more effective tactic to protect the long-term goals of the Caucus' lobbying strategy.

Another area in which the LWC has provided support for current and future Liberal Women Parliamentarians is that of campaign nominations. Beginning with a commitment to have increased numbers of female candidates running for the Liberal Party, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien vowed to have at least 25% female candidates. Despite calls from those opposed to affirmative action that the process was undemocratic, former Chair Carolyn Bennett pronounced in favour of the Liberal practice that allows the leader to appoint candidates. "May the best man win - I do not think cuts it these days", she said, recognizing that it is a temporary measure to be used until the numbers of women and visible minorities in Parliament are topped up. Clearly the small percentages present in Parliament, despite the numerical majority of women and the abundance of visible minorities in Canada, highlight to what extent it is still a difficult arena to penetrate.

In addition to the emotional stresses of participating in almost hostile competition, and the alternative pitfall of being a sacrificial lamb in an unwinnable riding, another of the recognized challenges that women face when pursuing a nomination for a given party is access to the networks of financial support that have traditionally been available to male candidates. As admitted by Sheila Finestone, "women politicians have a harder time fundraising simply because they don't have the links that men do", mentioning the "pool parties" that they held to raise \$20,000 for 12 female candidates who ran in Quebec. Lobbying on behalf of Women's Caucus, Carolyn Bennett worked towards changes in the spending allowances within Liberal Party nomination campaigns.⁶ Promoting the recommendations of the Lortie Commission on electoral reform, the Women's Caucus realized a partial victory at the Liberal Party's Biennial Convention in May 2000 with the adoption of a resolution to curb the

nomination campaign spending and limit the amounts to be spent on nomination campaigns. The committee set the limit at 50% of the expenditures allowed for the election campaign. This failed to constitute the significant reduction upon possible spending that the Caucus had hoped to initiate in order to level the playing field for female candidates who traditionally have more difficulty securing financial backers. Finally, in a speech to the House of Commons' Procedure and House Affairs Committee regarding Bill C-2 his Election reform bill, Don Boudria suggested that the law include financial incentives for parties that field women. Although this provision was not included in the final version of Bill C-2, one positive change to improve accessibility for professional women (and men) when proposing their candidacy was in Section 80 which states that every employer to whom Part III of the *Canada Labour Code* applies shall, on application, grant any such employee leave of absence, with or without pay, to seek nomination as a candidate.⁷

Ensuring the inclusion of women in important committees, positions and delegations seems obvious, and yet the reality on Parliament Hill was such that the LWC still needed to remind those making the decisions that it was a factor that needed more systematic attention. In an environment where factoring in regional and linguistic concerns is assumed, the Liberal Women's Caucus has been there to highlight a new demographic that requires systematic inclusion if the government of Canada is to equitably reflect the gendered make-up of Canadian society among its ranks in its Committees, its Friendship Groups and its delegations abroad. In turn, this kind of professional advancement has assured that the women who do get elected can pursue gratifying careers, and are not marginalized from the various rewards systems that give MPs a range of interesting outlets for their energies, be it travel with a delegation, stewardship of a Friendship Group, or work on a challenging and often male-dominated committee. Despite the personal and family stresses that women in particular must balance as Parliamentarians, if the women develop a sense of achievement and gratification from their roles on the Hill, they will be more likely to run for re-election. This will enhance the retention rate of women in the House of Commons, and build towards a critical mass that will ultimately transform the political culture permanently. This personal and professional support, combined with the changes in the Liberal Party nomination regulations is working to build a strong turn-out of Canadian women who wish to enter elite politics, and whose numbers will continue to force the reevaluation of systemic barriers to women's participation in Canadian politics in numbers equal to men.

The LWC has also worked to raise awareness among male colleagues about the importance of issues affecting women through celebrations such as International Women's Day. In order to raise awareness among her male colleagues, when Paddy Torsney was Chair she initiated a celebration of International Women's Day that focused the parliamentary discussions on women, and featured almost exclusively women in the House from the Speaker, to the pages and the MPs who spoke to a variety of issues important to women and their communities. The caucus sought to improve the situation of women on the Hill through the pursuit of a very basic amenity: a women's washroom within close proximity to the Chamber. One month after the House opened, the closest women's washroom was closed for renovations and so women were forced to trek their way up three floors mid-debate to find one. The Speaker agreed to solve the washroom problem, even if he had to build more facilities; thus the men's washroom next to the Office of the House Leader was renovated to create a women's washroom as well.

A symbolic achievement in recognizing women's role in Canadian politics occurred under Chair Jean Augustine with the adoption of the Famous Five Foundation's monument. Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Irene Parlby are known as the Famous Five as a result of the historic 'Person's Case' they fought against the government of Canada so that women would be recognized as persons and become eligible for appointments to the Senate.⁸ The Famous Five Foundation was created to promote the recognition of women's contributions to nation building, and consequently, President and CEO, Frances Wright, approached Women's Caucus to seek support for a sculpture of the Famous Five for Parliament Hill. This monument would become the first on Parliament Hill to effectively honour Canadian woman for their political participation and country-building efforts. Jean Augustine approached the Minister of Heritage Sheila Copps, the Minister for the Status of Women Hedy Fry, and the Minister for Public Works Alfonso Gagliano, to explore the possibility of bringing this monument to Parliament Hill. In December 1997, Ms. Augustine brought a motion in the House that passed with unanimous consent signaling an important commitment to the implementation of the Famous Five on Parliament Hill. This Monument was unveiled in October 2000.

A Feminist Policy Generator

Perhaps the most important role of the Liberal Women's Caucus is that of policy development. In the words of Carolyn Bennett, the main goal of the Women's Caucus is

to ensure that the spectrum of voices at the table include the perspective of women Members of Parliament and a feminist perspective of the policy process of government through inclusive decision-making that incorporates the views of feminist women and men.

Party discipline, stronger in Canada than in most countries, makes it extremely difficult for women to introduce gender issues. Lisa Young notes that female MPs often find themselves negotiating space for gender concerns within the constraints of both partisanship and regionalism. The LWC has established a niche for itself and has gained the ability to represent the voices and concerns of the feminist majority of women to Cabinet and to its colleagues. The first Liberal Women's Caucus under Paddy Torsney, invited each Cabinet member to appear before Caucus to discuss the purview of their department's responsibilities, programs and initiatives, and how they were impacting on women. Over the years, this format has become the focus of Women's Caucus and has been one of the most useful ways in which they have been able to impact on policy directions pursued by the Liberal government. All Caucus Members noted the rise in attendance when Ministers were scheduled to come before Caucus, as these meetings provided the ideal opportunity for backbench MPs to raise important issues with the Minister directly, and the improved access to Ministers was understood to be significantly superior to that achieved by an MP who attempts to gain access to a Minister. For example, between January and June 2001, the LWC welcomed 11 different Ministers, the Prime Minister's Social Policy Advisor, the Scientific Director for the CHIR Institute for Gender and Health, and two Justice Officials.⁹ Reflecting on the interaction between Minister Robillard and Women's Caucus concerning the events surrounding the government's decision on pay equity, a staffer noted that the Minister wanted to appear before women's caucus to inform them of the recent developments, the court's decision, and to listen to the opinions and concerns of the women present. Carolyn Bennett reflected that they had lost the first round on pay equity by failing to convince the government not to appeal. However, after extensive informal discussions and lobbying of those concerned, when an appeal decision was to be made the second time around, the government acquiesced and did not appeal Judge Evan's decision of October 19th, 1999.

The security of having Women's Caucus on-side, or at least knowing of the concerns and objections that the Women's Caucus has towards a Minister's piece of legislation gives valuable feedback to the Minister. It is an important way for the government to build solidarity around an issue and avoid embarrassing controversies if certain members, or significant portions of Caucus who

are of a particular demographic have problems with the bill. Moreover, appearing before Caucus to discuss new areas of concern gives the Ministers a heads-up so that the final legislation is reflective of the views of Women's Caucus, and will have an equitable impact on Canadian men and women.

The following examples illustrate different ways in which the Liberal Women's Caucus has successfully impacted on public policy decisions.

The importance Ministers place upon the support of the Liberal Women's Caucus is indicated by appearances of Allan Rock and Paul Martin before Caucus in the lead-up to two key policy initiatives. Minister Rock was scheduled to address the Caucus on April 25th, 2001 to discuss his draft legislation on Human Assisted Reproduction. His briefing of and discussions with the LWC occurred before briefings to full Cabinet and briefings to National Caucus, demarking his own concern with hearing the feedback of women on this sensitive issue so as to ensure that his latter briefings would fully include the concerns of this important internal constituency. A second example is Mr. Martin's appearance before Caucus on May 3rd, 2001 for a pre-budgetary consultation to hear the women's priorities and concerns. Due to the fact that Mr. Martin did not have enough time to deal with all the issues raised, he asked if he could return in the coming weeks to complete the dialogue. He returned to Caucus on June 6th, 2001 to finish the discussion and respond to several questions that had been submitted to him in advance of the meeting. In the words of a Martin staffer, "he always meets with them during the pre-budget consultation period, and considers their input vital to the budget process. Not only do they contribute numerous initiatives of their own, the Caucus represents an important venue for the Minister to sound out initiatives under consideration by the Department in the lead-up to the budget."

Another way in which women's caucus has been a strong policy generator is in issues that are perceived as being gender-neutral, and that have consequently required deconstruction to expose the disproportionate impacts on women. Women's Caucus is not always the lead on such issues, but their work in tandem with other Caucuses has demonstrated the effective impact of double-teaming. Carolyn Parrish commented that she felt Women's Caucus was most effective when it challenged issues that were not necessarily female-related, but that required a female perspective; joining with other caucuses on key areas adds an extra voice to the Reports at National Caucus and gives the issue at hand more visibility. This collaboration happens among other Caucuses as well and is not unique to Women's Caucus.

In policy areas affecting women, however, having the LWC focus on a given issue raises its profile and increases its chances of being included on the Cabinet's agenda. One example repeatedly mentioned by Caucus Members was the work done by Bonnie Brown as lead on seniors' pensions. Mr. Martin's 1994 Budget announced a year of program review in order to make cutbacks in the right areas. The senior's benefits program fell under review and changes to an income-progressive senior's benefit based on family-income was to be initiated. Being alarmed by this change, Ms. Brown signaled to Social Policy Chair Reg Alcock the need for a Sub-Committee on Pensions. As Chair of this new Sub-Committee on Pensions, Ms. Brown worked with social policy researcher Paul Genest, as well as an economist to look at the changes proposed by Minister Martin on seniors' pensions and how they would impact on women. A Report by the Sub-Committee that was submitted to Minister Martin illuminated how the new benefits calculation process would strip women pensioner's independent status in its return to a family-based system, and expressed grave concerns about this policy shift since women had long since established that they should be considered as individuals independent of their conjugal spouses. This slowed down policy changes in Minister Martin's department in 1995 and more time was taken to look at the issue. Due to the close collaboration and overlap of Women's Caucus Members and Social Policy Members, Marlene Catterall became aware of the pensions issue and raised it as a priority for Women's Caucus to pursue. A small group of Women's Caucus Members focused their efforts on this issue. The Caucus requested a gender-based analysis from Mr. Martin on this initiative and invited him to Women's Caucus to discuss the legitimacy of the policy shift and its moving forward. The combination of the concerted efforts of the Social Policy Caucus, its unanimous Report to the Minister, and the pressures from Women's Caucus resulted in the abandoning of a policy change in the calculation of senior's benefits.

An example in which the Liberal Women's Caucus was forced to flex its collective muscle was in the area of women's health. With her commitment to promote women's health through the feminist model of inclusive decision-making and horizontal structure, Carolyn Bennett was not about to see women excluded from a new spending initiative on health research in Canada. After the independent Commission studying the Institutes of Health initiative tabled its report without any mention of an Institute to specifically study Gender and Health, the LWC moved into action. Paul Genest was invited before Caucus as the policy person for Mr. Rock's office to discuss the Health Institutes initiative. Caucus

registered its outright protest at the Commission's failure to specify two institutes of vital concern to Women's Caucus: one that would focus on Gender and Health and one that would focus on Aboriginal Health. The Caucus wrote to the new governing councils and met with Alan Bernstein following a meeting with the Chair of the Canadian Health Institute for Research (CHIR) to lobby for a change in their decision. The political strong-arming that the Caucus pursued is reflected in Marlene Catterall's comment when she says, "we told Minister Rock's policy advisor to direct this 'independent body' to include an Institute for Gender and Health." Clearly, when key issues of concern to the Women's Caucus such as Women's and Aboriginal Health are blatantly excluded from a new program or spending initiative, the Caucus has shown its ability and willingness to flex its muscles and seek the correction of that exclusion. Maintaining their ties to the CHIR Institute of Gender and Health that resulted, the Liberal Women's Caucus welcomed Scientific Director Miriam Stewart as the guest speaker on February 22nd, 2001 to speak of the Institute's plans, and to invite the caucus to participate in a brainstorming meeting to generate key areas upon which the Institute would focus its attention.

A final policy area in which Women's Caucus has taken the lead and produced slow, yet incremental change that will fundamentally transform public policy is in the implementation of the Federal Plan for Gender Equality. This Plan was a commitment made at Beijing +5, the Special Session hosted by the United Nations five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing of 1995, and had as its goal the adoption and promotion of public policy initiatives that are informed by Gender-Based Analysis. The Liberal government has been slow to fully implement this commitment despite its successful re-election in 1997 and more recently in 2000.

Caucus Members began to raise a series of questions when Ministers appeared before Standing Committees on Estimates since the implementation costs of GBA should be showing up in the departmental audits, providing concrete measures of which departments are honouring the federal government's commitment.

Using a different tactic to promote the GBA implementation strategy more directly, this issue was raised by Women's Caucus during the last two visits of Mr. Martin before Caucus. In an attempt to receive concrete answers on key policy areas, the Women's Caucus submitted a list of questions to the Minister so that he could prepare responses for his second appearance. Highlighting the points raised in Lisa Philipps' paper, *Women, Taxes and Social Programs*, and Armine Yalnizan's *Canada's Great Divide*, the Caucus questioned the Minister on the

long-term implications of the government's budgets, raised a point of contention surrounding the funding of post-secondary education of aboriginal youth, and provided information that affirmed the disproportionately negative impact of tax cuts on women. Mr. Martin acknowledged the premise of the document, *Canada's Great Divide* and recognized an increasing gap of income prior to taxes and transfers. He agreed with the literature that cutting taxes does not help non-tax filers, and concurred that tax cuts need to be accompanied by social programs. More specifically, he revealed that the Department of Finance does not look at gender, but rather targets families and low-income Canadians without any gender lens. He demonstrated that he was open to continuing the discussion of gender-based analysis with Women's Caucus.⁹

Conclusion

Within the framework of the Liberal Women's Caucus, a core group of 10-25 women is working strategically, tactically, and some would argue subversively, to ensure that the realities of Canadian women are reflected in government policies, and to demand that the faces of Canadian women are represented in the bodies that generate those policies, and in the delegations that present them abroad.

The networking process of Women's Caucus enables them to strategize as a group and then fan out as separate individuals. This collaborative approach turns their individual energy into momentum toward specific goals for women's rights and is what makes the Caucus effective. The successes they see achieved through Women's Caucus act to counterbalance the personal and professional stresses of life on the Hill, and encourage them to have faith in their ability to achieve a female-friendly institution by influencing the maze of departments, the party structures, and the political culture itself.

Caucus has also shown that backbench MPs can indeed hold sway within National Caucus and consequently within Cabinet, if they work in the strategic ways

of the Liberal Women's Caucus. This provocative group has been instrumental in its representation of Canadian women's experiences to government, and in its promotion of women politicians on the Hill. Their use of cooperative tactics to realize key outcomes has enabled the Liberal Women's Caucus to carve out its niche as a networking circle that promotes Liberal Women on Parliament Hill, and as an internal feminist policy watchdog that promotes the interests of Canadian women and equality-seeking men alike.

Notes

1. Manon Tremblay, *Des femmes au Parlement: une stratégie féministe?*, les Éditions du remue-ménage, Montréal, 1999, p. 162. Manon Tremblay notes that during the 35th Parliament, the Liberal Women's Caucus was not open to men. The current LWC is open to all Liberal parliamentarians, male and female, be they backbenchers, chairs of committees, parliamentary secretaries, or even members of Cabinet.
2. Charlotte Gray, "House-breaking: fifty-three women MPs are fighting the relentlessly male culture of the Hill", p. 4, www.web2.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/734/229/30533151w3/purl=rc1_CPI_0_L9, accessed 30/03/2001
3. Politics: Women's Insight, Analysis of the IPU survey by Dr. Marilyn Waring et al, 2000, p. 106.
4. Shabbir Cheema, Speech given at a meeting on Women and Political Participation: 21st Century Challenges, New Delhi, India, United Nations Development Programme: Management, Development and Governance Division, magnet.undp.org/Docs/Gender/Speechsc.doc.html
5. Sydney Sharpe, *The Gilded Ghetto: Women and Political Power in Canada*, 1994, p. 220.
6. Taber, Jane, "Making politics easier for Liberal women", *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 13, 2000.
7. Bill C-2, Section 80.
8. Famous Five Foundation website, <http://www.famous5.org/html/famous5.html>, accessed 09/01/02.
9. Summary of the National Women's Caucus 237th Parliamentary Session, Liberal Research Branch, pp. 1-4.